

Time for a fresh start

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With the dawning of a new year, comes an opportunity to start fresh in dealing with the issues that will define the future of the communities of south central Utah.

Even though many people have a picture of rural Utah as being a laid-back place with no real important issues, there are a lot of things that need to be dealt with.

Communities are going to have to address growth issues, such as affordable housing, economic growth and costs of maintaining and expanding infrastructure. Community improvement projects have the potential to create disagreements as one person's idea of an improvement fits another's concept of a fiasco.

One big issue that never seems to stop creating controversy is a proposed power plant near Sigurd. The proposal to build a coal-fueled power plant has been as divisive as any to have hit the region. While proponents of the plant say the plant will be cleaner than any other in the country, those who oppose it feel that the physics of burning coal can't be mitigated enough.

There are sure to be more issues, developments and projects that will generate disagreements, arguments and controversy during the coming year. It is unavoidable. There really is no way to make everyone happy all the time.

The trick is to be able to discuss the issues without turning them into personal attacks. Too many people make the leap from discussing an issue to attacking others on a personal level.

One needs go no further than The Reaper's Web site to see how fast a message board discussion can devolve from a debate into a festival of insults. A number of posts submitted to The Reaper's blogs have been deleted before ever being approved because they have ignored the policies clearly posted on the site, which include a prohibition on using obscene language.

When someone feels they are losing an emotional battle, it is often an instinct to lash out in a hurtful way, by insulting someone's character or veracity.

There is one key to making sure an elected official represents his or her constituents. That key is for the constituents to talk with the official. In a non-threatening and even friendly way, share opinions with those who are in public office, or who are taking public office. A friendly exchange will get a person further than an allegation or a condescending diatribe.

Hopefully, people will use 2008 as a chance to voice their opinions civilly, and work together to find the best solutions for south central Utah's problems and challenges.

The Richfield Reaper